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SIX-YEAR TRENDS IN INTEGRATION ATTITUDES OF DEEP-SOUTH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS*

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INTRODUCTION

Over sixteen years have passed since the U. S. Supreme Court ruled against segregation in public schools. It now appears possible to make a reasonably-confident assessment of principal trends in the integration attitudes of deep-South university students.

The University of Alabama has served as a national symbol of Southern resistance to desegregation on two occasions. In 1956, the main campus was briefly desegregated, amid riots, by Miss Autherine Lucy. In mid-1963, two black students, Miss Vivian Malone and Mr. James A. Hood, were admitted under federal court order. It was on the latter occasion that then-governor George C. Wallace made his publicized but brief "stand in the school-house door" (Simpson and Yinger, 1965: 503). Since that time, the University has remained technically desegregated.

According to a recent observer, "The University's response to desegregation has been scrupulously nonpartisan," but he also notes that, "Tradition assures, at least for the present, that this posture of strict nondiscrimination will accrue to the benefit of the white student" (Egerton, 1969: 27). So far, no black student has "made" the football team, a fraternity, or a sorority. Black students still constitute a small part of the undergraduate enrollment on the main campus: 1 (0.0%) in 1963, 57 (0.6%) in 1966, and 190 (1.8%) in 1969.[1] It seems reasonable to suggest that the University of Alabama is representative of many deep-Southern institutions of higher learning.

METHOD

During this period of the University's transition from segregation to desegregation, three surveys concerning the integration-related attitudes of the student body were made: the first about two months before the enrollments of Malone and Hood, in April, 1963; the second in November, 1966; and the last in November, 1969. Each stratified quota sample included roughly 10 per cent of the ("white") students and was adjusted for proportional representation by college, class year, and sex. Final adjusted sample sizes were 676 in 1963, 871 in 1966, and 1,039 in 1969. Results of the first two surveys, including an examination of causal factors, were previously reported (Muir and McGlamery, 1968). The present report will summarize the trends in these attitudes during the period 1963-1969.

Each questionnaire contained, as a subset, thirty-four items which remained unchanged, except for "tense", throughout the three surveys. Each item had a Likert-type response set composed of five standard alternatives; "strongly agree", "agree", "undecided", "disagree", and "strongly disagree." The two levels of agreement and disagreement were combined (the residual percentage is "undecided" combined with a small number of non-answers) for presentation of the items in four a priori categories (Tables 1-4). To facilitate comparisons, the "direction" of each question was considered and the response adjudged to be favorable to segregation presented first. In each case the percentage "strongly agree or agree" has an asterisk.

One-tailed t-tests were run on the data in its original, five-alternative form to test the general hypothesis that"legal and other changes in the surrounding national culture are producing increasing favorableness to integration among deep-South college students." These were conducted at the .10 level of significance, but other levels are reported for the interest of the reader.

FINDINGS

Attitudes regarding major areas of desegregation. In the conventional areas of conflict, all of which appear to involve "social" implications (Table 1), the percentage of students with integration-favorable attitudes has increased an amount of about four percentage points each year. In 1969, a strong majority of students were favorable to integration in all five areas examined, although this could be said for only one or two areas in 1963. Particularly interesting is the strong reversal in the attitudes concerning the desegregation of the University, from 5 to 3 against, to 3 to 1 approving.

Table 1 about here

Social Distance on campus. These findings are reiterated by the "social distance" data (Table 2), these items being college-level analogues of the general "social" areas discussed above. Again, the percentage of students with integration-favorable attitudes appears to be increasing roughly four percentage points per year. In 1963, a majority of students had "no objection" only to attending class and sports events with Negroes. By 1969, the list of majority-accepted situations included all that were not personally "social", but a clear, if decreasing, majority continued to object to rooming with, double dating with, and dating black students.

Table 2 about here

Perception of Negro characteristics. Favorable perceptions of blacks (Table 3) were held by a majority of students on only the one item related to "intelligence" in 1963. By 1969, favorable responses were reported by a majority of students on six of the nine items, the percentages increasing an amount of about three percentage points per year.

Table 3 about here

Table 1. Attitudes Regarding Major Areas of Desegregation

Item	year of survey	% pro-segregation	% pro-integration	Levels of significance of t 63-66	66-69	63-69
1. The choice of a marriage partner is a private affair and no legal restrictions should be placed on the choice in terms of race, religion, or creed.	63 (N=676)	30.6	61.8*			
	66 (N=871)	26.4	62.6	.10	.00001	.00001
	69 (N=1039)	14.3	81.0			
2. Freedom of worship means that all individuals, without regard to race, should be able to attend any service they choose.	63	34.5	54.4*			
	66	28.9	62.1	.0001	.00001	.00001
	69	12.9	80.6			
3. Everyone in America ought to be able to travel any place he wants to go by whatever means he has available and without restriction on where he should sit.	63	39.2	48.7*			
	66	23.4	65.7	-.00001	.00001	.00001
	69	12.9	80.0			
4. There should be legal restrictions to keep Negroes from mixing socially with whites.	63	37.7*	44.5			
	66	21.6	57.8	.00001	.00001	.00001
	69	14.8	74.2			
5. Desegregation of the University of Alabama is a step in the right direction to improve the quality of citizenship in the state.	63	47.3	30.0*			
	66	31.9	45.7	.00001	.00001	.00001
	69	21.6	59.3			

*Combined % "strongly agree" and "agree" (residual % was "undecided")

Table 2. Social Distance on Campus

Item "If qualified Negroes are admitted to the University of Alabama, I have no objection to. . ."	year of survey	% pro-segregation	% pro-integration	Levels of sign. of t 63-66	66-69	63-69
1. attending classes with them.	63 (N=676)	32.5	56.4*			
	66 (N=871)	19.6	76.6	.00001	.00001	.00001
	69 (N=1039)	4.6	92.2			
2. having them attend the college sports events.	63	31.5	54.4*			
	66	14.1	76.2	.00001	.00001	.00001
	69	4.1	92.0			
3. sitting next to them in class.	63	48.7	39.1*			
	66	33.2	55.3	.00001	.00001	.00001
	69	12.2	80.0			
4. walking on campus with them.	63	58.1	27.7*			
	66	52.1	35.8	.0001	.00001	.00001
	69	24.9	61.6			
5. having them room in a college dormitory.	63	62.4	26.0*			
	66	30.8	56.6	.00001	.00001	.00001
	69	15.0	75.1			
6. having them in my "bull" sessions or "hen parties".	63	61.4	25.2*			
	66	49.5	34.9	.00001	.00001	.00001
	69	28.0	54.6			
7. attending social events with them.	63	68.2	18.6*			
	66	37.7	47.1	.00001	.001	.00001
	69	32.2	47.5			
8. eating in the cafeteria at the same table with them.	63	71.6	18.2*			
	66	59.8	30.0	.00001	.00001	.00001
	69	30.4	53.9			

*Combined % "strongly agree" and "agree" (residual % was "undecided")

Table 2. (con't)

Item	year of survey	% pro-segregation	% pro-integration	Levels of sign. of t 63-66	66-69	63-69
9. having them in my social fraternity or sorority.	63	81.8	7.1*			
	66	62.9	20.0	.00001	.00001	.00001
	69	45.5	31.5			
10. having them room with me.	63	85.2	5.8*			
	66	72.8	17.6	.00001	.00001	.00001
	69	60.7	23.0			
11. double dating with them.	63	91.9	2.5*			
	66	79.9	12.3	.00001	.00001	.00001
	69	62.7	20.9			
12. having a date with them.	63	97.0	.9*			
	66	84.0	11.0	.00001	.0001	.00001
	69	75.1	11.9			

*Combined % "strongly agree" and "agree" (residual % was "undecided")

Table 3. Perception of Negro Characteristics

Item	year of survey	% pro-segregation	% pro-integration	Levels of sign. of t 63-66	66-69	63-69
1. I never met a Negro who is my equal in intelligence.	63(N=676)	23.5*	58.3			
	66(N=871)	22.2	65.0	.05	.00001	.00001
	69(N=1039)	9.5	80.1			
2. American Negroes do not have the capacity to compete with white students in white universities.	63	38.2*	46.6			
	66	20.3	65.9	.00001	.00001	.00001
	69	10.6	77.3			
3. If given an equal chance to obtain a college education at a white institution, most Negroes would become officious, overbearing, and disagreeable.	63	23.5*	45.0			
	66	14.9	58.8	.00001	.01	.00001
	69	15.2	62.3			
4. Negroes will probably take revenge on the whites in the South if their economic position is raised to that of the average white person.	63	24.7*	44.8			
	66	24.7	48.5	.10	.00001	.00001
	69	18.4	53.8			
5. The moral standards of the South will drop if the Negro is given the same opportunities to use public facilities as the white people.	63	42.5*	39.1			
	66	30.4	50.1	.00001	.00001	.00001
	69	18.3	61.4			
6. Most Negroes are just as trustworthy as most white people I know.	63	47.6	34.0*			
	66	45.8	35.5	-	.00001	.00001
	69	32.2	46.8			
7. The Negro is generally shiftless, lazy, and lacks ambition.	63	49.7*	34.6			
	66	50.5	34.7	-	.00001	.00001
	69	26.4	57.2			
8. Some Negroes may be just as capable, intelligent, and worthy of opportunity as the white man but this is the exception rather than the rule.	63	60.8*	31.5			
	66	54.3	36.5	.01	.00001	.00001
	69	38.0	48.4			
9. Most Negroes are more superstitious than any white persons I have ever met.	63	61.4*	22.8			
	66	54.0	30.9	.01	.001	.00001
	69	43.3	31.5			

* Combined % "strongly agree" and "agree" (residual % was "undecided")

To some extent these perceptions are a function of continuing observable differences between Southern "blacks" and "whites" produced by the well-documented effects of segregation and economic discrimination. Regardless of their source, however, these responses indicate that negative stereotypes of blacks are held by a rapidly-decreasing minority of these students.

Attitudes regarding political and economic equality. The percentage of students favorable to political and economic equality (Table 4) is similarly increasing, but at a slower pace of about two percentage points per year. This may, in part, be attributable to a "ceiling effect" since items 1-7 had majority "integration-favorable" support even in 1963. This is not surprising when it is realized that a "separate but equal" segregationist could theoretically respond "integration-favorably" to all of these items without being inconsistent. Item 8 directly measures this possibility and the results are consistent with this interpretation, with 40.5 per cent of the 1963 students seeing no conflict between segregation and democracy. Nevertheless, favorability to political and economic equality is a necessary (not sufficient) condition for desegregation, and these data indicate strong student acceptance as early as 1963.[2]

Table 4 about here

SUMMARY

These data leave little doubt that significant increases have occurred betwen 1963 and 1969 in these university students' favorableness to integration. The general research hypothesis,that the changing national environment is leading to increasing acceptance of blacks by deep-South university students, can be accepted at the 90 per cent level of confidence for every item. Indeed, the probability of obtaining a value of t as large

Table 4. Attitudes Regarding Political and Economic Equality

Item	year of survey	% pro-segregation	% pro-integration	Levels sign. of t 63-66	66-69	63=69
1. Negroes should be treated exactly like white people by the police and the courts.	63 (N=676)	4.6	90.8*			
	66 (N=871)	9.0	88.8	-	.00001	.00001
	69 (N=1039)	5.3	92.7			
2. Every citizen in a democracy ought to have the right to vote or hold office.	63	18.2	74.6*			
	66	28.2	66.1	-	.00001	.00001
	69	18.5	77.2			
3. Negroes should not be given the same voting privileges as white people.	63	18.2*	72.9			
	66	17.1	76.5	-	.00001	.00001
	69	7.2	88.4			
4. There should be legal restrictions against Negroes running for public office.	63	13.9*	69.8			
	66	8.0	81.1	.00001	.00001	.00001
	69	4.7	89.8			
5. Negroes should be chosen for jury duty on the same basis as white people.	63	17.3	67.6*			
	66	13.3	77.6	.00001	.00001	.00001
	69	6.7	86.2			
6. All citizens, regardless of race, religion, or creed, should have equal right to stage a protest march or picket against something they dislike.	63	31.2	55.0*			
	66	31.8	55.2	-	.00001	.00001
	69	21.9	62.4			
7. Negroes have as much right to any job for which they are trained as a white man.	63	6.8	85.2*			
	66	11.6	82.7	-	.00001	.00001
	69	5.0	88.7			
8. Segregation of the races does not conflict with the ideals of freedom in a democracy any more than does desegregation.	63	40.5*	37.7			
	66	35.1	41.3	.05	.00001	.00001
	69	26.9	49.4			

* Combined % "strongly agree" and "agree" (residual % was "undecided")

as that observed between 1963 and 1969 data, by chance, was less than one in a hundred thousand for each of the thirty-four items tested.

Rapidly increasing acceptance of blacks was found in the four major areas examined: general societal areas of conflict, social distance on campus, perception of Negro characteristics, and attitudes regarding political and economic equality. Taken as a whole, these data indicate that the student majority at a deep-South institution, whose administration has never publicly indicated a desire to go beyond "strict compliance," has changed from acceptance of "separate but equal" segregation to approval of desegregation, in a little more than six years.[3] The majority of these students have not yet accepted "social integration" but strong trends in this direction are evident.

FOOTNOTES

*Paper read at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Washington, D.C., 1970.

1. For comparison, Negroes made up 30.1 per cent of Alabama's 1960 population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1960: PC(1)2B).

2. This finding goes far to explain why the "socially separate, if equal" form of legal desegregation experienced by the University has been largely without incident. The ultimate cost to the University of this, in terms of consequent polarization, remains to be seen.

3. It must be emphasized that these findings concern only the attitudes of "white" students. Since 1.8 per cent of the enrollment at the time of the 1969 survey was "black", the integration attitudes of the "average" University of Alabama student are somewhat different ("more favorable", so far) than these figures indicate. This effect on the characteristics of the "average" student will, of course, become increasingly significant as the proportion of black enrollments increases.

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